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**MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL WELCOMES TO CHICAGO HIS EXCELLENCY MICHAEL D. HIGGINS,
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND**

Mayor Emanuel, President Higgins discuss strong cultural and economic ties between Chicago and Ireland

Today Mayor Rahm Emanuel welcomed His Excellency President Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, and Mrs. Sabina Higgins, First Lady of Ireland, to Chicago.

"I am honored to welcome President Higgins and First Lady Higgins to the City of Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago and Ireland share a historic bond and today's meeting is one of the ways we continue to reinforce those strong ties."

In their meeting today, Mayor Emanuel and President Higgins discussed the commitment and close relationship shared by Chicago and Ireland. Mayor Emanuel has welcomed over 10 Irish government officials since taking office, including a visit from Taoiseach Enda Kenny in March 2012. Since 1997, Chicago has had a Sister City relationship with Galway, Ireland where President Higgins served two terms as Mayor.

Chicago and Ireland continue to have robust cultural and economic ties. There are more than 25 Ireland-based companies in the Chicago area and 42 Chicago based-companies in Ireland, with total trade around \$814 million. The City of Chicago is also home to 730,000 residents with Irish ancestry, the second-largest Irish community in the United States. The Art Institute of Chicago will also be unveiling an exhibition devoted to Irish art and culture beginning next spring.

Mayor Emanuel and President Higgins were joined at today's meeting by dignitaries from the Republic of Ireland and the City of Chicago. Her Excellency Ms. Anne Anderson, Ambassador of Ireland to the United States of America and Aidan Cronin, Consul-General of Ireland in Chicago were in attendance. Alderman Patrick O'Connor, Alderman Mary O'Connor and Michelle T. Boone,

Commissioner of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, also represented Chicago at the meeting.

Since taking office in 2011, Mayor Emanuel has committed to improving Chicago's international relationships, meeting with dignitaries from Britain, Germany, Mexico, India, China, Korea and Poland among many other nations.

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Photo Credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago

Photo Caption: Mayor Rahm Emanuel welcomes His Excellency President Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, and Mrs. Sabina Higgins, First Lady of Ireland, to Chicago.